

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8511

INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T AMMAN 3680

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS PFOR, JO, US,SA

SUBJECT: JORDAN AIR DEFENSE

REF: (A) AMMAN 3552, (B) JIDDA 4810

1. ON JULY 13 I SAW KING HUSSEIN FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE HIS VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA JULY 4 AND 5.
2. KING GAVE ME PRETTY MUCH THE SAME DETAILS AS RIFAI HAD CONVEYED EARLIER (REF A).
3. KING PUT SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON THE FACT THAT KING KHALID SEEMED TO BE IN CHARGE, THAT HE APPEARED TO WANT TO BE IN CHARGE, THAT FAHD DEFERRED TO KING ON EVERY POSSIBLE OCCASION, AND THAT KHALID SPECIFICALLY RECOMMENDED TO THE JORDANIANS IN ANY FOLLOW UP ON AIR DEFENSE, THEY KDDP IN TOUCH WITH PRINCE SULTAN.
4. KING COMMENTED THAT JORDANIANS MAY WELL HAVE MADE A MISTAKE IN TRYING TO DEAL WITH FAHD RATHER THAN KHALID INITIALLY ON AIR DEFENSE. KING REITERATED THAT RIFAI'S VISIT TO SHAH OF IRAN WAS SUCCESSFUL AND SHAH CONFIRMED KHALID'S COMMITMENT OF \$500 MILLION FOR A WEATERN AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM FOR JORDAN.

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5. KING SAID HE HAD TRIED AND THOUGHT HE HAD

SUCCEEDED IN CLEARING THE AIR DURING HIS VISIT.
HE OUTLINED WHAT THE UNITED STATES HAD RECENTLY
PROPOSED TO HIM BY WAY OF A RESTRUCTURED PACKAGE FOR
BETWEEN \$510-\$543 MILLION. (KING SEEMS TO HAVE
GOTTEN SOMEWHAT CONFUSED OVER THE NEED FOR SAUDIS
TO GIVE JORDAN ALL OF THE MONEY RIGHT AWAY IN
ORDER TO GET THE LOWEST OF THE TWO QUOTED PRINCES.
I DID NOT ATTEMPT TO UNTANGLE THIS WITH HIM,
ALTHOUGH I HAD MADE CLEAR TO RIFAI EARLIER THAT IF SAUDIS
COMMITTED THEMSELVES FOR THIS SUM, MONEY WOULD BE
PAID OUT OVER A NUMBER OF YEARS, BUT THAT COMMIT-
MENT ITSELF WOULD HELP BY ALLOWING US TO ORDER
SOME PIECES OF EQUIPMENT AND THEREBY REDUCE SOMEWHAT
INFLATIONARY COST FACTORS.)

6. KING SAID HE ALSO MADE CLEAR TO KHALID WHAT THE
SOVIETS HAD OFFERED. KING SAID HE HAD TOLD KHALID
THAT WHAT SOVIETS HAD OFFERED WAS MORE MOBILE BUT THAT
HE HAD NO CASH. BOTH OFFERS WERE ABOUT THE SAME PRICE. US
OFFER WOULD ALLOW JORDAN TO CONTINUE TO RECEIVE ITS
ARMS FROM WESTERN SOURCES WITH WHICH IT HAD DEALT
OVER LONG PERIOD OF TIME AND THIS WAS A DECIDED
ADVANTAGE.

7. KING SAID THE SAUDIS HAD BEEN GENERALLY OPTIMISTIC
BUT INDICATED THEY WOULD HAVE TO CONSIDER THE SITUATION FURTHER.
SAUDIS HAD ALSO SAID THEY WOULD TAKE UP THE QUESTION
DIRECTLY WITH THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR IN SAUDI ARABIA
AND WANTED DISCUSS THE ISSUE WITH THE US. KING INDICATED THAT
SAUDIS HAD GIVEN AN ASSURANCE OF AN EARLY REPLY AND
THAT HE STILL FELT UNDER RATHER SIGNIFICANT PRESSURE
FROM HIS OWN MILITARY FOR MORALE REASONS TO TELL HIS ARMY
SONN WHAT WAS HAPPENING. I TOLD THE KING I WOULD KEEP HIM
ABREAST OF DEVELOPMENTS AS THEY CAME TO MY ATTENTION.

8 KING ALSO TOLD ME THAT HE HAD BRIEFED ASSAD FULLY
ON JULY 10 ON AIR DEFENSE SITUATION. KING SAID
ASAD WAS QUITE SURPRISED THAT SOVIETS HAD NOT BEEN
MORE FORTHCOMING WITH JORDAN AND SAID, ACCORDING TO
KING, "I HAD EXPECTED THE SOVIETS TO DO MORE FOR
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JORDAN."

9. COMMENT: FROM WHAT BOTH RIFAI AND THE KING HAVE
TOLD ME, I FEEL WE CAN BE CONFIDENT IN ASSUMING JORDAN
WOULD UNDER PRESENT CONDITIONS ACCEPT A US AIR DEFENSE
SYSTEM IF SAUDIS CAME UP WITH \$500 MILLION. WE ASSUME THE
SAUDI IDEA IN PROVIDING A LONG-TERM CREDIT WITH LOW INTEREST
TO JORDAN FOR \$200 MILLION (REF B) IN ADDITION TO AN IMMEDIATE

\$300 MILLION CREDIT WOULD BE FOR FACE-SAVING PURPOSES. WE
ALSO ASSUME THAT THE TERMS FOR THE CREDIT WOULD BE SUCH AS NOT TO
CAUSE JORDAN ANY SERIOUS FUTURE DEBT SERVICE PROBLEMS AND MAY
WELL BE SUBJECT TO LATER SAUDI FORGIVENESS IN WHOLE
OR IN PART AS TIME PASSES.
PICKERING

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